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ABSTRACT

This publication presents options raised through various forums for marketing adult and community education (ACE) in Victoria, Australia, and suggested strategies. After an introduction (chapter 1), chapters 2 and 3 provide a broad view of the current situation for marketing ACE. Chapter 2 discusses general issues in the current position--ACE ethos, focus on funding or customers, marketing capacity, and opportunities. Chapter 3 addresses key marketing issues: brand, image, and awareness; current markets; networks and linkages; and marketing features--the six "Ps" (promotion, position, place, people, price, and products). Chapter 4 sets up parameters for future response: marketing objectives and strategic marketing framework. Chapters 5 and 6 provide suggestions for ACE's response to the market situation. Chapter 5 discusses core issues that must be addressed at the state level to improve the overall effectiveness of ACE marketing: competitive position, networks, leadership, professional development, priorities, and key initiatives. Strategies are presented as indicative options for responding to the core issues. A table lists the issue, strategy response, and activities for these levels: state and clusters, regions, local providers. Chapter 6 selects priority groups and provides suggestions for marketing strategies to reach them and enhance their participation in learning. A table provides a group profile for each group and, for each strategy, suggests implementation level and possible activities. (YLB)

MARKETING ACE IN VICTORIA

Research conducted for the Adult, Community and Further Education Board
July and August 2000

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CONTENTS

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1. Introduction

ACE is one of the best-kept secrets on the learning landscape of Victoria.

Every year, the sector delivers millions of hours of education to adults on a diverse range of topics. Despite this, outside the immediate 'family' of providers and customers, there seems to be fairly limited awareness of what exactly ACE does, how and why it does it and the philosophical foundations of the sector. 'Outsiders' often seem to think of it as a combination of learning and welfare – which feature dominates appears to depend on where you are coming from and why you have interacted with the sector.

ACE has extraordinary potential to play a central role in developing a lifelong learning culture given that, according to market research, the way it operates appears to align so well with what people want – more community based, flexible, affordable, informal and personal than the services of other learning providers. But this potential is still under-developed for a variety of reasons.

In June 2000, the Adult Community and Further Education Board (ACFE) commissioned Quay Connection to work with the ACE sector in Victoria to enhance existing, or develop new, approaches to marketing of ACE products and services to customers. Using the findings of the ANTA national market research on learning as the foundation, the project was designed to:

- explore the relevance of the research to markets in regional and urban Victoria
- discuss the potential impact of research findings on current practice and
- identify the key components of a marketing strategy for the sector

During August and September 2000, marketing consultants from the ACE sector and Quay Connection consulted groups of providers and key community informants in each of the nine ACFE regions in Victoria.

Participation in the consultations was diverse and included large and small community education providers from every kind of learning centre and community house. Participation by stakeholders and key informants was also impressive. Workshops included major employers like *Target* and *Birdseye*, employer organisations like the Ai Group, mayors from learning towns like Horsham and Ballarat and other local government representatives, specialist academics from local universities, representatives of key services like Centrelink and representatives of other learning providers including TAFEs.

Drawing on the ANTA research, community participants discussed local learning needs, priority target groups, gaps in provision and opportunities for partnerships and collaborative learning activities.

Workshop participants from the ACE sector discussed their current customers, community learning needs and opportunities, target markets for the future and the strategic options for marketing their services. They also examined the relevance of the market segmentation model produced from ANTA research (see attachments) and the implications of individual attitudes and values about learning for the way they do business.

Following consultation workshops, the team also presented three short professional development sessions through which a smaller number of participants explored a range of models for marketing behaviour and attitude change and discussed some of their own marketing priorities.

Throughout the series of twelve workshops, there was vigorous discussion on a broad range of issues, some of which impact strongly on the potential of individual providers and the sector as a whole to reach into key target markets.

For example, ACE appears to work in confused and confusing territory. Despite the 1998 vision statement, there is still uncertainty among some providers and many more stakeholders about the role of ACE – what ACE should be trying to achieve and how it fits with other education and community development services. Nevertheless, there is remarkable consensus about ACE's current markets and those it seeks to reach as a matter of priority, for whatever reason.

Participants were very frank about the strengths and weaknesses of ACE services and elements that require general improvement or more stringent quality control. They were also vocal about the ongoing challenge to secure predictable levels of funding, quality facilities and equipment and adequate hours for management and administrative staff.

There were interesting differences in perception between ACE providers and key informants, particularly around the image and awareness of ACE and the extent and effectiveness of links and networks in the community. And there is, of course, a great diversity both in the level of skill and experience in marketing and the extent to which marketing is seen as a core or peripheral function of ACE providers.

The diversity of workshop participants inevitably meant that discussion included views drawn from a wide range of experience and expertise. For example, some participants are actively embracing marketing and others are sceptical about its potential; some are networking aggressively and others are staying close to home territory; some are breaking into new markets, others are sticking with their traditional customer base. The report inevitably talks at times in generalities, summarising a prevailing view or a majority finding and does not seek to represent the many exceptions.

What follows is a summary of the emerging themes from the consultation and professional development workshops, the options raised through those forums for marketing ACE in Victoria and some suggested strategies for moving forward. It is not a summary of the consultants' views but of the views and options presented to us during the consultation process.

2. The current position – general issues

2.1 ACE ethos

There is an apparent tension between the social justice ambitions of ACE to provide learning opportunities for all and the commercial realities of competing for customers and making services pay.

For many providers, ACE is more of a movement, a set of values about learning, than an education provider in a tightly defined sense, even though education is a central service. This set of values is grounded in:

- community development
- a commitment to ensure access to learning for even the most marginalised and
- prior experience of learning as a gateway to improved social and economic participation

In this context, the commercial imperative to get 'bums on seats' and generate a certain number of student contact hours seems at odds with social objectives and is perceived as a frustrating constraint on the 'real' work of reconnecting people with their community through learning.

Managing this paradox has been a defining characteristic of ACE to date and it would be a pity to lose ACE's capacity to hold these two concepts together.

But the way the paradox plays out is that too many providers try to be 'all things to all people' and that makes effective marketing almost impossible. It will be important to find a less exhausting way to manage the dilemma.

2.2 Focus on funding or customers

The focus on funding formulae, competition and commerce has effectively distracted some providers from developing customer driven marketing approaches. Discussions about funding played a critical part in the workshops and not just in the predictable "we need more money" way, although that was of course part of it.

There were two particular aspects to the discussions that bear on the potential for effective marketing. The first is about flexibility. The lack of flexibility in the funding formula means, for many providers, a limited capacity to change or to develop new approaches especially ones that do not involve student contact hours. The process of central funding allocation is demotivating – providers don't feel that it gives them enough control over their own destiny, certainly not enough control to respond effectively to local conditions and markets.

Secondly, ACE providers have an incredible dedication to the wellbeing of their customers but some identify almost too strongly with the 'survival' struggles of the more marginalised, especially when it comes to making a small amount of money go a long way. Marketing feels like an unaffordable luxury.

The marketing mindset - a focus on understanding the needs, desires and demands of customers as the drivers of successful services – seems to trivialise the challenges they face and for whatever reason, does not connect with the philosophy of being learner centred.

The instinct is to focus inwards. This in turn reduces providers' efforts to network with other commercial and community organisations. The perception is that ACE providers have a very strong community base; in reality many are not so well connected to relevant community elements. This is particularly marked in terms of links with employers or business and industry groups, which are generally poor.

2.3 Marketing capacity

Marketing capacity is very patchy across the sector. Some providers have developed an in depth understanding of their markets and work to sophisticated marketing strategies and plans. Others understand marketing as advertising and promotion only. Some see marketing as outside their territory, someone else's responsibility, someone else's skill. There is a significant lack of skill in needs assessment, situation analysis and customer research – all too often, demand is identified either through intuition or by who walks in the door. Almost all providers said that they needed ongoing help to collect information, analyse it and use it to inform marketing.

Even among the larger providers, marketing experience and skills are all that well developed, with some notable exceptions. This inhibits the capacity of ACE to make the cluster concept work, to contribute to learning towns and to reach effectively into new markets.

There is a growing interest in social marketing and a desire for professional development in the field. There is an even stronger interest in getting support for marketing – external help to work through some of the basic elements and to develop strategic plans, possibly also to implement them.

2.4 Opportunities

There's no doubt that the recommendations of the Kirby Report and the funding initiatives for clusters and learning towns create terrific opportunities for ACE providers to work in new ways and reach into new markets. However, there is much less clarity about how to make the most of these initiatives. For some providers, they are just adding another level of complexity and increasing the level of demand on stretched services. And, because marketing skills are patchy across the sector, the extent to which providers can capitalise on these opportunities is less certain.

The Kirby Report makes it clear that ACE has an important role to play in helping certain groups of young people to get back into learning, by offering an alternate style of learning experience and creating pathways to qualifications and jobs. It is an identified priority for many providers but most agree that their services are neither attractive to young people nor tailored to meet their needs. They don't promote to young people much and are not clear on how they will target the youth market. They are also unclear about the kind of products and services they need to meet youth preferences.

The cluster concept is evolving. The model is a natural fit for ACE, given the diversity of providers, but its contribution to improved marketing will rely on:

- Better links between ACE providers in the cluster and between the cluster and other learning providers and community networks
- Greater differentiation between providers and the development of some fields of specialisation among providers within a cluster, in order to meet the different needs of different market segments
- Leadership from the more skilled providers that includes cluster level needs analysis and possibly product development as well as shared promotional activities and resources
- Mentoring of smaller or less skilled providers by cluster leaders, particularly in marketing

ACE's potential to play a significant role in the 'lifelong learning revolution' will be most immediately apparent through learning towns. ACE is a natural provider of learning opportunities that match what people say they want. But ACE providers have to take the lead in networking and collaborations and to do so have to stop seeing themselves as the 'poor cousin' on the learning landscape.

The learning town concept relies on the idea that within the full spectrum of learning opportunities, there is something to suit everyone. Without restraining competition, a town's learning providers will need to collaborate to ensure that most market segment needs can be met, customers can mix and match their learning experiences and no-one falls through the cracks. That means that ACE providers who are coordinating a learning town initiative have to put real effort into three areas:

- Analysis of learning resources
- Analysis of learning needs and customer preferences
- Networking and collaboration for product development, marketing and customer referrals

It is not clear how many providers in learning towns have these skills.

3. Key marketing issues

3.1 Brand, image and awareness

The ACE brand is unclear to many providers and many customers and unknown to many potential customers, partners and allies.

Branding is basically about 'the promise' of the service and the product. What are you going to get or experience if you use ACE? What are the unique or defining features of ACE? What differentiates it from other services? What's its place in the system?

The brand promise of other education providers is pretty clear. University is about academic achievement and future prosperity, TAFE is about vocational education and training and school is about general education for life, future study and work. What is ACE about?

Among providers and some key informants, there is agreement about some key ACE characteristics:

- the needs of the learner come first, ACE services are 'learner centred'
- responsive and almost infinitely flexible
- reaching some of the most marginalised
- informal and personal
- accessible and community based
- a gateway back to learning or work

These characteristics are not generally reflected in ACE promotions. ACE providers:

- do use the ACFE logo because they have to, but don't all feel a sense of ownership
- don't share a common promotional language or promote common features
- don't use common signage or share promotional materials
- don't all define themselves primarily in educational terms – some are a community house first, an ACE provider second

This makes it hard for the average consumer, individual or enterprise, to get a sense of what they will experience or achieve as an ACE customer. The image of ACE varies from professional training provider to homely community house. According to key informants, if they don't have direct experience of their local ACE provider, they aren't clear about what is on offer, what is possible or why they should choose ACE.

The ACE brand is much more about a style of learning experience than it is about a set of products or outcomes. That is not easy to explain yet that understanding has to be at the core of any brand marketing. Most ACE providers said they would welcome initiatives at the State or regional level designed to increase awareness of ACE and develop its brand.

At the regional level, few ACE providers differentiate themselves from others. There's a collegiate sense in ACE that perceives competition between providers as unhealthy and while they recognise their differences (in service, style, size and customer base) they don't use these differences to attract different markets.

Differentiation, through collaboration in clusters, will be important to growing the ACE market and enhancing its contribution to the promotion of lifelong learning. It does not have to come at the cost of core markets and services. It is not a question of giving up services in order to specialise in one area but an approach to improving the service to customers. Differentiation means building on the strengths of providers so that each becomes known for its particular expertise and skills, keeps improving its specialist knowledge and caters both for its core customers and some customers with particular demands and desires. That means that, within a cluster, ACE providers can reach a broader range of learners and meet their needs with high quality services.

3.2 Current markets

ACE providers consistently service a diverse set of markets and there is considerable consensus about the groups that form the core of ACE customers:

- Women, particularly older women and women with young children
- Newly arrived migrants and people of NESB, for ESL programs
- People with low literacy and/or numeracy skills
- People returning to work, particularly women
- Small numbers of young people, particularly those whose needs are not met in schools or TAFEs
- IT beginners of all ages and both genders
- Small groups of people with mild intellectual disabilities
- Personal interest and 'hobby' learners
- Older people

In general, the needs of these groups are well met and providers report fairly high levels of customer satisfaction. There seems to be an almost bottomless pit of demand for IT courses and for ESL programs, especially for new migrants and refugees. However, providers also acknowledge that there is plenty of room for improvement, especially in developing products and services that more closely meet the learning needs and desires of young people and people returning to work, especially mature age men.

Participants also noted that they are increasingly being seen as 'the provider of last resort' – taking individual clients who are referred by TAFEs or schools or intensive employment assistance agencies because those organisations are unable or unwilling to meet special learning needs or preferences. This tends to confirm ACE provider perceptions that they are working 'at the bottom end of the market'.

And unfortunately, while ACE providers have a strong commitment to work with these clients, it is an expensive business to take them on and the dollars do not always follow the individual from one service to another, even though theoretically they should.

A few providers are also beginning to develop significant fee for service markets with employers and to offer real competition for TAFEs in vocational and pre-vocational education and training. But these achievements are not generalised and the market for ACE in business and industry is very underdeveloped.

There is also consensus about other markets that are underdeveloped and those that 'should' be a higher priority for ACE providers. These include:

- Men, of almost every kind but particularly mature aged unemployed, 45+ with low skills and young men who have not completed school
- Early retirees
- Small business owners and operators, particularly in growth sectors like tourism, viticulture and horticulture
- Rural business, particularly farmers
- Advanced IT
- Vocational skills for aged care services and call centres
- Young people 'at risk'
- Young families
- Indigenous Australians

Most providers also agree that they are generally sticking to their traditional markets or responding to 'who walks in the door'. Few aggressively seek and develop new markets.

There is general concern about the dominance of women in the customer base. It is a feminised sector – women have developed it and built its strengths and women are the core of the customer base. Unfortunately, the gender imbalance has some unintended negative consequences. It makes services less attractive to men and younger people, it reinforces the 'lesser status' of the sector and it means that ACE is not serving the whole community but mainly one part of it. Greater gender balance is seen as desirable, more healthy and one of the keys to achieving other desired changes.

In terms of the ANTA segmentation, the bulk of effort goes into addressing barriers in order to improve participation by the *Learning on Hold*, *Make it Easier* and *Almost There* segments and providing ongoing services to the *Passionate Learner* segment. To a lesser extent, providers are also picking up some participants from the *Might Give It Away* and *Learn to Earn* segments. Philosophically, they would like to do more to attract people from the *Forget It* and *Done with It* segments but recognise both how difficult and how costly it is to recruit those groups to learning. If they do anything with these two segments, it is probably more by accident than design.

There is also considerable pride in the fact that ACE often provides a gateway for people to return to learning and go on to 'bigger and better things', in learning and employment. This is where their hearts lie – opening opportunities, creating confidence, increasing participation, reconnecting people to communities and opportunities.

There is very limited experience of working with market segmentation models although providers do understand their markets in terms of demographic groups. What they have not generally come to grips with is the idea that customers who share demographic characteristics do not necessarily share values, attitudes, preferences or learning needs.

3.3 Networks and linkages

One of the often cited strengths of ACE is that providers are very well connected into their communities and this is certainly the perception of providers. In reality, providers are often connected into a fairly predictable network of 'family and friends' and are not always strongly linked to local government, business or industry groups or employment organisations that could provide access into new fee for service markets or improve services to existing markets

During the workshops, there were many occasions when key informants – employers, welfare agencies and employment services - identified learning needs and opportunities that could be taken up by ACE if only informants knew more about ACE products and services and delivery options.

There appear to be a few dominant reasons for this:

- Developing and sustaining networks takes time – a lot of time – and that work falls to the bottom of the priority list when competing demands on time are weighed
- Many providers don't have a lot of experience of breaking into unfamiliar territory and lack confidence that what they have to offer will be of interest or relevance
- Providers don't comfortably talk 'the language of business' and don't always recognise where ACE values and business values do and don't fit; there's a reluctance to embrace the more baldly productive goals of business learning unless they are also packaged with broader social goals

Of course there were examples of both planned and opportunistic networking that is leading into new markets or strengthening work with existing market: for example, providers working with the local branch of the Victorian Farmer's Federation, Centrelink, local tourism councils, Chambers of Commerce, major employers and with clubs and pubs.

However, these examples did not emerge consistently across the sector – networking still depends very much on individuals. . In general, providers in rural and regional Victoria seem to be more committed networkers than those in larger urban centres; at their own admission, this is because they have had to be – networks are part of their survival kit.

Networking skills will be critical to making the cluster and learning towns concepts work.

3.4 Marketing features – the 6'P's

Promotion

Most providers describe their marketing efforts in promotional terms. Some are working to quite sophisticated marketing plans but the majority rely on a small number of traditional promotional tactics – the 'brochure', print advertising in local papers, limited radio advertising and occasional forays into direct mail and publicity drives.

Much of this is dictated by funding constraints – providers use the cheapest media to make their dollars go further. There is almost no use of television and little marketing through networks or new media (like websites and email). Distribution strategies for print materials are not very well developed. Few make use of their Boards of Management or Councils or even satisfied customers to assist in the marketing effort either by briefing them or by asking them to promote into their own networks.

Of course there were examples of inventive low cost promotions, like:

- partnerships with local newspapers to secure regular feature coverage of 'what's happening in ACE'
- promotions with lap tops at field days for 'try before you buy' computer courses
- development of a 'two fat ladies' cooking course, run by 'large' local personalities, to capitalise on the popularity of the television show

Promotions are also rarely targeted to specific segments or groups. This is partly because ACE providers want to attract a broad cross section of participants, partly because they try to be 'all things to all people' and partly because there is little experience of working with market segmentation.

Promotions are also very product and service specific – there just aren't the funds at the local level to invest in raising awareness of ACE or promoting the value of lifelong learning to groups that are not currently interested.

Position

The competitive position of ACE is strong in its traditional markets, generally weak outside them. There are efforts to position ACE as 'learning the way you like it' with new markets of young people and mature age men or 'learning to suit your needs' with markets that have obvious competing time demands – like farmers and women with young children.

The image of ACE – as a bit too homely, not quite serious or professional enough – means that for many markets it doesn't compete against other providers, until of course customers discover that the image is far from the reality of the experience.

And there were plenty of creative and inventive examples of ACE providers repositioning their services to attract new markets, including:

- repositioning the feminine image of ACE – by setting up 'learning sheds' for men
- repositioning learning through ACE as flexible to compete against potential loss of productive time - by taking laptops to farms to run basic IT skills training with farmers and their families
- challenging the competition from leisure time - by taking computers to pubs for demonstration sessions, going to the market instead of waiting for the market to come to the provider

There are many issues that impact on the competitive position of ACE but three stand out:

- Time – and that is common to all learning providers; people are just too busy these days and learning experiences have to become much more flexible to be competitive
- Image – too female, too homely, too informal for some customers
- Outcomes – many key informants weren't aware of the range of vocational and work related learning experiences that ACE can deliver and they hold on to an image of ACE

as a provider of hobby or remedial learning; ACE just doesn't look competitive with TAFE or private vocational education providers

Place

Facilities appear to be a problem across the sector. Many providers say their facilities are too run down, too small, impermanent, unattractive. Few have yet come to grips with the idea that in the future, mobility may become more important than the quality of the home base.

Of course, quality of facilities is important to a lot of learners and does impact on image but the 'place' issue is about where and when learning is delivered and is as much to do with convenience and access as it is to do with quality of physical surroundings.

Many providers are looking to the new capital works funds to shore up their existing community facilities. Some have just gone around the problem and started to deliver introductory IT programs in pubs and clubs or vocational programs in workplaces. Some future capital expenditure may need to go into making ACE more mobile.

People

There is an understandable fear about the impact of marketing on already stretched staff resources. Most individuals already feel that they try to do too much – and they probably do.

There is a need to lift the marketing capacity of the sector, both at the provider and governance levels, but also to challenge the mindset of many providers. Being customer focused is not that different from being learner centred but that is not the current understanding of the marketing discipline.

There are also great examples of good practice and people with strong skills but there isn't a systematic way to learn from these or to use skilled services to mentor others. People have high hopes that the clusters will help with this but are also looking for more direct support and for professional development.

Price

ACE services are very price competitive – low cost and affordable and good value for money. Unfortunately some potential customers seem to think that they are too cheap to provide quality.

In fee for service or general education work, providers are good at working out what the market will bear although they undersell their services some of the time.

The challenge for most providers is how to keep funding the general education programs they run, when they are not funded by government and many of their customers are in the lowest income brackets. This dilemma taps back into the tension between social justice and commercial ambitions, given the importance of general education as a gateway back to learning for many of the most disadvantaged learners. ACE general education programs also often provide the first point of reconnection for people who have been isolated in their communities.

Products

The product range is broad and diverse and apart from products that fit into the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), providers have a great degree of freedom to develop new products that appear to meet community need or demand. It is enormously important to retain this level of local responsiveness. However, the breadth of product range does contribute to some of the confusion in the market about what ACE is and what ACE does or can do and to the perception that ACE is ' all things to all people' – or at least tries to be.

Some measure of specialisation or greater sharing of products and product development is desirable in the future. It will help to consolidate the ACE brand and image in the market and to reduce the stress on providers who stretch scarce resources too thinly. Some of this needs to occur through the clusters, some through less formal collaborations.

4. Responding to the future

Sections two and three have provided a helicopter view of the current situation for marketing ACE in Victoria.

Sections five and six provide some suggestions for how ACE can respond to this market situation. This section sets up some of the parameters for future response.

4.1 Marketing objectives

One of the immediate challenges is to clarify the objectives for the marketing strategy. As a result of the consultation and professional development workshops, there appear to be five broad goals:

- to improve the competitive position of ACE in the Victorian market for learning
- to enhance the ACE sector's contribution to building community capacity through learning
- to improve the ACE sector's capacity to target priority groups and segments within the overall market for learning
- to enhance the financial viability of the ACE sector by growing fee for service markets
- to improve the professional marketing capacity of the ACE sector as a whole, including providers, clusters, learning towns and regions

The strategy options and examples proposed in sections five and six are designed to contribute to the achievement of these objectives.

4.2 Strategic marketing framework

The ACE sector also needs to make a commitment to a strategic framework for marketing that can be applied at the State, regional, cluster or individual provider level. This will strengthen the marketing effort and add a measure of consistent direction across providers and regions. During the course of consultations we have tested two linked models for marketing that appear to clarify the marketing challenge and be capable of adaptation to every level.

4.2.1 Marketing behaviour change

The first is drawn from the social marketing work of A. Andreassen. It is recommended as a primary approach because it puts the customer at the centre of marketing strategies, not the organisation. A customer driven approach to marketing is essential to achieve growth and improve customer satisfaction.

The model is based on the concept that behaviour change occurs in stages and in order to encourage people to take up a desired behaviour – like post compulsory learning - we have to first understand where their attitudes and values place them on the path of behaviour change. Then the model provides a set of guidelines for marketing to different segments at each stage on the path, with strategies designed to move each group progressively closer towards the desired behaviour.

The model has been applied to the ANTA market segmentation and identifies the behaviour stage of each of the eight community segments and with some lesser confidence to the three employer segments. While the ANTA segmentation is based on psychographic characteristics and ACE markets are defined in demographic terms, most workshop participants had little difficulty in locating their customers and target groups within the ANTA values segments.

Stages of behaviour change				
Stage	Indifferent	Aware	Ready	Doing it
ANTA segments	Forget It Done with It Not Interested	Make it Easier Learning on Hold	Almost There	Learn to Earn Might give it Away Passionate Learners Here and Now High Valuers
General strategies	Raise awareness Get it on the agenda	Improve the competitive position	Remove barriers Increase urgency	Meet expectations Add value
Existing ACE markets/ targets/ programs	❑ men ❑ youth 'at risk'	❑ literacy and numeracy ❑ mature age unemployed	❑ literacy and numeracy ❑ women returning to work ❑ people with MID	❑ older women ❑ ESL ❑ Beginners IT ❑ general education ❑ young 'drop outs'
ACE target markets	❑ small business ❑ men 45+ ❑ young 'at risk'	❑ small business ❑ young families ❑ farmers	❑ rural businesses ❑ growth sectors	❑ employers ❑ advanced IT ❑ general education

4.2.2 Securing customer relationships

The second model is designed to provide a simplified framework for planning and implementing marketing activities, once segments have been identified. It focuses on both internal and external functions - meeting the needs of customers in each segment in order to increase customer satisfaction and generate repeat business but also ensuring that the organisation has the necessary skills, products, networks and partnerships to deliver services to customers. It presupposes selection of priorities – that at all levels, the ACE sector will focus its efforts on priority groups and needs.

It draws on traditional marketing theory and provides series of steps for looking at your business to make sure you have addressed all the key elements to ensure that your existing customers are satisfied and you live up to your promises to new customers.

Planning and implementing marketing activities		
Internal functions		
planning	❑ situation, needs and competitive analysis of local market for learning and segmentation of market	❑ State, region, cluster and provider level; ❑ learning town coordinator
priorities	❑ select segments to target according to both needs analysis, established social goals, funding priorities and capacity to meet needs; ❑ consider specialisation within cluster ❑ identify behaviour change stage of target segments	❑ State, region, cluster and provider level
skills	❑ review skills base and enhance to ensure cluster or provider has skills to meet segment demands and desires, including style and level of learning experience	❑ cluster and provider level
products	❑ review product range, develop new products to meet segment demands and desires	❑ State, cluster and provider level
networks	❑ establish and maintain networks to improve access to target segments, enhance promotions and develop partnerships	❑ State, region, cluster and provider level; ❑ learning town coordinator
External functions		
promotion	❑ design messages and information for target segments ❑ select appropriate media and channels of communication	❑ State, cluster and provider level
delivery	❑ determine place and time of delivery according to segment desires ❑ develop flexible delivery opportunities and secure partners for delivery	❑ cluster and provider level
relationships	❑ maintain communication with partners, networks and customers ❑ consult on future demands and desires	❑ State, region, cluster and provider level; ❑ learning town coordinator
evaluation	❑ review success of marketing efforts against plans and priorities ❑ identify areas for improvement	❑ all

5. Overarching strategies

5.1 Core issues

There are some underlying issues that have to be addressed at a State level to improve the overall effectiveness of ACE marketing. These include:

5.1.1 Competitive position

The ACE position in the market has to become strong and clear if it is to fulfil its role in developing a lifelong learning culture in Victoria. This means:

- a strong brand that reflects ACE values and the unique features of ACE learning
- clear differentiation between ACE and other learning providers
- high awareness of how ACE fits with other elements in the learning landscape

While its position remains unclear, ACE will continue to be less competitive with other learning providers and less effective at growing its share of the learning market. Proposed strategies focus on building brand, awareness and partnerships.

5.1.2 Networks

Partnerships and effective networks that reach outside the education sector are proving critical to the growth of learning activity at the local level.

Examples include employer or industry networks with which providers can link to develop vocational training opportunities. And representative networks, like the Victorian Farmers' Federation, with which providers can link to develop specific products and promotions that target farm business operators and families. Or networks that focus on specific issues – like youth at risk – into which providers can link in order to ensure that education and training opportunities are included in local support strategies.

These are not educational networks - they already exist to pursue their own specific goals or to represent a specific interest or membership group. But they present exceptional opportunities for providers to get learning on to the agenda of network members, to promote learning as one path to achieving goals and to identify the needs and wants of new target markets.

Many of the networks or representative organisations also operate at a State or regional level (eg VFF) where Statewide partnership arrangements and joint promotional activities might best be negotiated. This would enable local providers or clusters to focus on sustaining local network relationships and delivering services.

At the State level, this means:

- identifying relevant Statewide services and organisations to include in one or more networks, negotiating links, partnerships and joint activities
- maintaining regular communications with network members

- briefing regions and clusters on network agreements in which they can participate at a local level

In the first instance, the effort needs to go into State networks that provide reach into priority target markets. This will support and add value to local efforts to reach these groups.

Without State level networks on to which they can build, each ACE provider cluster or region will have to find the time and resources to develop their own at the local level. The activity will probably remain a low priority and many opportunities will be lost.

Networks are the focus of ACE activity in the nine learning towns. Targeted support from State level networking activities will also enhance the effectiveness of this initiative.

5.1.3 Leadership

Research shows that leadership is also critical to developing marketing capacity and to effective marketing through networks. Some providers and clusters have considerable strength in marketing and a strong track record of good practice. Although there is some reluctance to single out strong performers, it will be important to learn from existing good practice. A network of marketing leaders could support and mentor others in the development of their marketing plans and skills. At a State level, this means:

- identifying providers who can become part of a mentoring group
- pairing mentors with providers who have less developed marketing expertise
- resourcing necessary contact between mentor and learner

The marketing efforts of the sector don't have to start from scratch. It is important to recognise existing marketing expertise in the sector and to use it to increase the pace of change.

5.1.4 Professional development

There is an identified need to lift marketing capacity across regions and clusters. That means investment in a Statewide professional development program that focuses on building skills in:

- market research
- segmentation, situation and needs analysis
- networking
- marketing and communications strategy development

If a program isn't developed at a State level, marketing capacity will remain patchy across regions and clusters and the shift to customer focus will not be consistent across services. Strategies focus both on skills development and priorities for investment.

5.1.5 Priorities

ACE providers can't keep trying to be all things to all people. In order to improve reach and impact in key groups, to make the best use of scarce resources for promotion and product development and to improve market share, some tough decisions have to be made about priorities. While these can't be mandated for regions and providers, development of some products and promotional strategies at the State level would give clear help and guidance to many providers.

Based on the consultations, some of these priorities include a combination of specific market segments and priority programs:

- mature age unemployed, young people 'at risk' and fee for service markets in business and industry - for literacy and numeracy programs
- small business operators in growth sectors (tourism, horticulture, viticulture, farming) - for small business management programs and essential IT skills
- youth and people returning to work - for pre-vocational education programs
- Indigenous Australians and other groups with special learning needs
- others in the *Almost There* and *Might Give It Away* segments
- other in the *Make it Easier* and *Learning on Hold* segments

Consultations identified fairly broad consensus around these market priorities but stressed the limited capacity of providers to stretch existing resources in order to respond.

5.1.6 Key initiatives

The cluster and learning towns initiatives are an important investment for ACE. Both are designed to lift the capacity of the sector to contribute to the development of a lifelong learning culture in Victoria. Given that resources for marketing will be stretched, the ACFE Board could consider making marketing clusters and learning towns a priority for resourcing, using the initiatives to pilot new approaches to marketing, develop marketing skills and trial new products and programs. This would mean providing additional assistance to selected clusters and learning towns to:

- clearly identify local learning needs and market segments
- develop and sustain networks and partnerships
- implement new marketing approaches

By focusing assistance for a defined period, the ACFE Board can enhance the performance of the initiatives and provide excellent opportunities for others to learn from the experiences of marketing clusters and learning towns.

5.2 Strategies to respond to core issues

The following strategies are presented as indicative options for responding to the core issues identified. They are not meant to be definitive and need further refining before implementation. They are designed in such a way that implementation can be driven from the State level and mirrored or integrated with activity at regional, cluster or local level. There are obvious implications for resourcing at the State level.

STATEWIDE STRATEGIES - SUMMARY TABLE	
Issue	Response
Competitive position	❑ build the ACE brand ❑ improve public awareness ❑ promote ACE through networks
Networks	❑ develop Statewide networks ❑ develop partnership opportunities
Leadership	❑ identify marketing leaders ❑ design mentoring program
Professional development	❑ develop PD program ❑ improve internal information sharing ❑ implement mentoring program
Priorities	❑ determine priority market segments and programs ❑ coordinate needs analysis and market research for priorities ❑ develop coordinated product and service response to priority segments
Key initiatives	❑ trial integrated marketing approaches in learning towns and with marketing clusters

1. COMPETITIVE POSITION	
1.1 Strategy response -build the ACE brand in the marketplace	
implementation level:	activity
STATE	❑ achieve consensus and clarity on the brand values of ACE, unique features and key points of differentiation from other learning providers ❑ encourage ownership of ACFE logo by providers. ❑ develop a brand statement (slogan) to underpin the logo and promote brand values. (See SWP example of "different courses for different people with different needs"). Must be short, succinct, clear, simple. Advisable to employ a creative agency to develop options, once the key brand values for ACE are agreed ❑ test brand, logo and slogan options to ensure that language and style match customer and stakeholder expectations; review use of word 'education' in slogan given customer preferences for the word 'learning' ❑ develop a style guide to ensure higher recognition of the brand and consistency of all providers' use of logo on: buildings products materials brochures ❑ reinforce requirements for prominent use of the brand in all ACFE funded activity
CLUSTERS, REGIONS, LOCAL PROVIDERS	❑ use common branding and signage on all ACFE funded items across all clusters and regions: promotional materials including brochures, flyers, displays, kits, banners etc buildings and learning facilities, including outreach activities stationery and administrative materials ❑ develop common promotional language and share promotional materials; review how communications language reflects and reinforces ACE core values. ❑ develop a common plain English briefing kit about what ACE does in the region/cluster, to be distributed to all providers for use by Board and Council members and with networks, partners and media ❑ develop core information products for use in negotiation of new networks to ensure use of common language and style that can be adapted to individual provider needs ❑ incorporate regional values and differences in localised materials ❑ identify values and activities that differentiate providers within clusters or regions and reflect in promotional materials, within style guidelines

1. COMPETITIVE POSITION	
1.2 Strategy response – raise awareness through public communications	

STATE	❑ develop a set of core messages about the ACE learning experience and differentiate from other learning experiences eg school, TAFE and university
	❑ raise public awareness by implementing a Statewide communications strategy incorporating:
	  ❑ branding activities (for example promotions on milk cartons during Adult Learners Week)
	  ❑ advertising or publicity campaign about learning through ACE and the ACE contribution to community capacity building, using emotive media
	  ❑ partnership with Statewide community newspaper group eg Fairfax or Leader groups for ongoing, rotating coverage of localised ACE activity
	❑ create materials for use with new media and negotiate placements eg ACE profile page linked to partner and network organisation websites eg Centrelink, ITAB, VFF
	❑ develop central ACE website function to service and refer learning inquiries
	❑ develop implementation plan to capitalise on key promotional or learning decision points during the learning calendar eg start of academic year (February), winter (May – August). ALW

CLUSTERS AND LOCAL PROVIDERS	❑ develop local promotion and publicity plans to capitalise on Statewide communications activities and respond to local circumstances
	❑ review effectiveness of existing promotional materials and activities and assess opportunities for using new media and collaborative promotions with networks and partners
	❑ develop talent bank for use in local media activities to tell the human story of ACE learning, including:
	  ❑ public figures
	  ❑ colleagues
	  ❑ satisfied customers
	❑ develop briefing kit for Council and Board members to encourage their involvement in promotions and ensure consistency of messages

2. NETWORKS:	
2.1 Strategy response – raise general awareness of ACE through networks	
implementation level:	activity
STATE	❑ build and sustain networks to raise awareness and actively promote the strengths of ACE

	❑ enhance performance of existing and new networks: design framework for improved networks into government and business sectors develop clear links between ACE and other learning providers establish partnerships with employer organisations ❑ identify gaps where ACE can operate in partnership with: employment services eg Centrelink, Job Network agencies business and industry eg Victorian Farmers' Federation, tourism council, Chamber of Commerce or Australian Industry Group, Industry Training Advisory Boards other local, State and Federal government agencies ❑ identify opportunities for regions and clusters to capitalise on State level networks at local level ❑ develop specific measures for linking State and local networks to support learning towns and cluster groups ❑ develop mechanisms for regular communication with networks and partners
REGIONS	❑ establish regional community and professional networks that link to State initiatives ❑ identify regional opportunities for partnerships with business and industry ❑ identify regional opportunities for partnerships with other learning providers eg with marketing studies departments in universities to work with ACE providers on specific marketing projects; with TAFE providers for provision of literacy and numeracy programs and pre-vocational education ❑ assist providers to capitalise on opportunities presented by networks and partnerships
LOCAL PROVIDERS	❑ identify access points for priority customer segments and opportunities for joint activities ❑ develop links to local government, business, industry groups and employer organisations ❑ identify local opportunities to link to State network initiatives ❑ develop and maintain low cost mechanisms for regular communication with networks eg email bulletins

3. LEADERSHIP	
3.1 Strategy response – develop mentoring program	
implementation level:	activity
STATE	❑ identify marketing leaders at regional, cluster and individual provider level and invite potential 'marketing champions' to participate in mentoring program ❑ invite applications from individuals for pairing with marketing mentors ❑ identify focus for individual programs and resource regular meetings between mentor and provider ❑ identify professional development needs that can't be met through mentoring
CLUSTERS, REGIONS,	❑ identify local marketing 'champions' in each region or cluster

LOCAL PROVIDERS	❑ provide networking support to mentor pairs

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
4.1 Strategy response – develop staged program for development of professional marketing skills	
implementation level:	activity
STATE	❑ confirm priorities for skill development and identify training provider for (at least) modules on market research, segmentation, situation and needs analysis, network and partnership development, strategy design ❑ identify provider preferences for delivery including options for staged regional and metropolitan delivery, online learning products and links to mentoring program ❑ invite applications from participants with priority for non metropolitan providers, learning towns and (non-marketing) clusters
CLUSTERS, REGIONS, LOCAL PROVIDERS	❑ review marketing skills among providers and identify skill gaps and needs ❑ nominate applicants and provide support for participation

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
4.2 Strategy response – build capacity in market analysis	
implementation level	activity
STATE	❑ establish template for market needs analysis, including relevant Statewide information and options for securing local market intelligence about priority groups ❑ consult key stakeholders about State market priorities and regional differences ❑ develop State based market segmentation identifying psychographic and demographic characteristics of segments ❑ develop annual needs analysis and segmentation report for distribution to regions, clusters and providers ❑ provide additional assistance for segmentation and needs analysis in learning towns

CLUSTERS, REGIONS, LOCAL PROVIDERS	❑ apply template to build local customer/community profile including State and local priority groups ❑ identify sources of locally relevant information to strengthen profile of priority segments/groups, market gaps and opportunities, competition for customers, customer demand for products and options for partnerships or collaborations ❑ apply SWOT analysis to profile and identify opportunities to address weaknesses and threats through differentiation within clusters ❑ consult key informants to confirm or refine community profile and market analysis ❑ select market segment or group priorities for targeting and identify relevant mechanisms for reaching customers

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
4.3 Strategy response – build mechanisms for sharing marketing information	
implementation level:	activity
STATE	❑ identify opportunities to coordinate a Statewide information system to share marketing initiatives and experiences across providers ❑ develop and coordinate regular email update that is based on contributions from organisations across ACE sector - to include information about marketing initiatives, materials and developments, research, professional development opportunities, evaluation findings, learning town and cluster activities, partnership opportunities, network developments ❑ provide online summaries of professional development and mentoring activities
CLUSTERS, REGIONS, LOCAL PROVIDERS	❑ encourage sharing of marketing effort, expertise and experience through contributions to email update ❑ identify specific interests and needs of individual providers to support differentiation

5. MARKET PRIORITIES	
5.1 Strategy response – determine State priorities for target markets	
implementation level:	activity
STATE	❑ draw on State level market analysis and segmentation and identify State level priorities for targeting by psychographic and demographic segments ❑ consult key informants, regions and clusters to confirm or refine selection of priority markets ❑ identify product and service needs of customers in priority markets and gaps in product and service delivery to meet those needs ❑ determine opportunities to reflect State priorities within annual performance agreements and other funding mechanisms

	❑ identify relevant strategies for marketing learning to priority segments and groups (using Andreassen model) ❑ develop template for localised marketing plans to target priority segments ❑ coordinate activities to develop, trial and implement new products and services for selected target markets, drawing on existing expertise of providers who already have experience with selected markets
CLUSTERS, REGIONS, LOCAL PROVIDERS	❑ apply marketing template to local profile of priority segments ❑ identify gaps in product and service provision to meet priority segment needs ❑ address gaps through differentiation within clusters and pilot new products and services as required

6. KEY INITIATIVES

6.1 Strategy response – trial integrated marketing approaches in learning towns and selected clusters

implementation level:	activity
STATE	❑ invite participation from learning towns and clusters specialising in marketing to participate in pilot project ❑ select one learning town and one marketing cluster to collaborate with ACFE on the development of an integrated approach for marketing ACE to priority segments and to pilot implementation ❑ coordinate development of template for integrated marketing and support participants in development of localised strategy and implementation plan ❑ provide assistance for market analysis, segmentation and development of networks and partnerships that capitalise or link into relevant State initiatives ❑ coordinate information sharing across the sector on development and implementation activities ❑ provide assistance to develop and implement evaluation strategy for each pilot project ❑ coordinate dissemination of pilot project outcomes and integrate learning into professional development program ❑ refine template for integrated marketing approach based on evaluation report
LEARNING TOWNS AND CLUSTERS	❑ adapt templates to local market situation ❑ develop relevant networks and partnership activities ❑ develop new products and service delivery options according to market needs ❑ provide regular updates on progress, gaps in strategies, impact of integrated marketing and identify requirements for additional guidance or support ❑ document the pilot project in reports at mid-term and end of trial ❑ participate in professional development programs to share key learnings from pilot approach

6. Market segments

6.1 Priorities

While State level marketing activity is designed to identify priorities, the consultation and professional development workshops have provided some consensus on what provider think those priorities are. These have not been tested with regions, State office or the ACFE Board.

For that reason, and because of the time and budget limitations on this project, we have not developed detailed strategies for each identified priority group. That is really part of the next stage of implementation for the ACE marketing project.

What we have done is select a small number of priority groups identified by workshop participants and drawing on the behaviour change model, provided some suggestions for marketing strategies to reach these groups and enhance their participation in learning or their likelihood of participation in the future. The strategies draw on available market research only and are designed to indicate how ACE might choose to market to these segments. Before any strategy implementation, further research is required to refine the customer profile and the proposed strategies.

Selected priorities are marked in large type italics in the following table that summarises input from providers. They include:

- at the *Indifferent* stage, youth 'at risk' including school 'drop outs', whom participants located in the *Forget It* market segment
- at the *Aware* stage, farmers (predominantly men 45+), whom participants located in the *Make It Easier* market segment
- at the *Ready* stage, operators of small and medium sized businesses in growth sectors (like tourism, horticulture, viticulture), whom participants located in the *Almost There* market segment
- at the *Doing It* stage (but not doing it through ACE), employers whom participants located in the *Learn to Earn* market segment for individuals (smaller businesses) and the *Here and Now* market segment for employers (larger businesses)

Stages of behaviour change				
Stage	Indifferent	Aware	Ready	Doing it
ANTA segments	Forget It Done with It Not Interested	Make it Easier Learning on Hold	Almost There	Learn to Earn Might give it Away Passionate Learners Here and Now High Valuers
General strategies	Raise awareness Get it on the agenda	Improve the competitive position	Remove barriers Increase urgency	Meet expectations Add value
Existing ACE markets/ targets/ programs	❑ men ❑ youth 'at risk'	❑ literacy and numeracy ❑ mature age unemployed	❑ literacy and numeracy ❑ women returning to work ❑ people with MID	❑ older women ❑ ESL ❑ Beginners IT ❑ general education ❑ young 'drop outs'
ACE target markets	❑ small business ❑ men 45+ ❑ youth 'at risk'	❑ small business ❑ young families ❑ farmers	❑ rural businesses ❑ growth sectors	❑ employers ❑ advanced IT ❑ general education

6.2 Strategy options for responding to selected segments

6.2.1 *Forget it* segment, sub group youth 'at risk' including school 'drop outs'

Group profile – youth 'at risk'	
Segmentation - at the younger end of the market, Forget It share many characteristics with the Might Give It Away segment – the key difference being that MGIA are still hanging in there and learning at present, although they could be about to drop out and join their FI peers. Those with low literacy or numeracy skills and life or family problems also share characteristics with the Make It Easier segment. There is likely to be an over-representation of males in the group	Learning experiences – they haven't enjoyed the learning they've done in the past, school hasn't met their needs, they haven't fitted in, they didn't get on with teachers and they haven't achieved. They don't have an intrinsic love of learning and dislike formal learning, especially the pressure of tests. Many of them don't have strong learning skills.
Motivation - they are not convinced that learning will help them to achieve their goals and to get back into it, they need to see a direct link between learning and goals, particularly between learning and jobs. They want a sense of achievement out of future learning to overcome their experiences of failure and they feel like they've been let down or left out and that the promises made have not been kept. They face real and perceived barriers to participation.	Competition – they don't have a lot of money so there is plenty of competition for their dollars. They are also likely to be heavily peer group oriented and would rather spend time with friends than in a learning situation, unless the benefits are significantly greater. Some face multiple life problems, including histories of family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness and depression and that means that learning is just not a priority for them.
Key features – helpful friendly teachers, recognition of achievements, informal learning experiences and links to employment will be critical for attracting and keeping this group. They may be interested in IT and other technology skills. But first they have to believe that learning can help them to get somewhere. Learning isn't really on their agenda.	Strategies – ❑ create awareness of the benefits of learning and interest in skills ❑ address competition and barriers to participation, including past negative experiences ❑ increase the expected gains and decrease expected costs

YOUTH 'AT RISK' AND SCHOOL DROP OUTS		
Strategy	Implementation	Possible activities
1. Create awareness and interest	State level	❑ develop partnership with school, TAFE and youth services sectors to develop awareness campaign for delivery through youth media and networks; messages focus on: ▪ benefits of acquiring skills for work and the importance of literacy and numeracy ▪ availability of new non school learning options for young people ▪ risks of getting left behind without work skills ▪ availability of support services for personal and family problems ▪ new pathways for young people and school to work transitions
	Local level	❑ support State campaign with targeted local publicity activities and joint promotions with youth groups and youth venues ❑ recruit young local heroes to promote the value of learning and training ❑ develop local networks with schools, TAFEs and youth services to improve reach and access to young people ❑ formalise information and referral mechanisms between learning providers
2. Address competition and barriers	State level	❑ negotiate administrative agreements for school age learners to participate in ACE ❑ secure arrangements for ACE participation within mutual responsibility framework, including work for the dole schemes ❑ develop partnerships with community organisations to collaborate on provision of learning programs with work experience
	Local level	❑ develop group learning opportunities to attract target group and peers and 'men and boys only' programs to reduce fears of failure and embarrassment ❑ recruit older learners to mentor young people at risk ❑ develop informal learning opportunities to address negative perceptions and impact of previous negative experiences ❑ develop opportunities to deliver literacy, numeracy and beginners' IT programs in alternate venues, like access centres, youth clubs and drop in centres ❑ increase pre-vocational education opportunities ❑ create strong links to local youth support services ❑ promote ACE as the 'friendly, personal' learning provider

3. Increase gains and decrease costs	State level Local level	❑ develop pricing strategies to include subsidies, grants or pay as you go options ❑ participate in networks with other counsellors and careers advisers to create job pathways and stronger links to local employers and small businesses ❑ negotiate work experience placements supported by pre-vocational education programs ❑ increase recognition and promotion of individual achievements

6.2.2 *Learning on Hold* segment, sub group farmers (predominantly men 45+)

Group profile – farmers	
Segmentation: while they know the value of learning and have benefited in the past, at this stage in life and career it just isn't a priority. Some people in *Learning on Hold* don't see the point of getting into education again, some feel that they have achieved their goals and others just have too many other demands on their time and money. They face a number of real and perceived barriers that have to be addressed and they need to be persuaded that learning is relevant and will add value to their work lives.	**Learning experiences**: they like learning and have enjoyed their previous learning experiences, although that was probably some years ago. Learning is not about qualifications for them, it's about skills and achievement. They are picking up new skills all the time but formal learning is not on the short term plan. Farmers want practical learning experiences now that will help them to deal with the challenges of working in the rural economy.
Motivation: this group will need some very good reasons to get back into learning again and they won't be easy to persuade. However, they may be motivated by the need to keep up with new technologies and agricultural developments and the need to manage the farm finances, especially since the advent of GST. They may also be motivated by programs that help the whole family to develop new and valued skills.	**Competition**: there is plenty of competition for their time, money and energy. They are already juggling the demands of the farm and the family and they have little time to spare. If the weather's good, they're working on the property. Living out of town, most learning opportunities mean travel and that's not convenient. Many will have little cash to spare and high levels of debt so the cost of learning is also issue.
Key features: highly flexible delivery is critical for this group to address the time and inconvenience barriers. Programs delivered on site, instant 'wet weather' programs and self paced or computer based learning products will be more attractive than conventional approaches. IT products, tailored to managing the farm business, are also important. They like helpful and approachable teachers, small groups and plenty of individual attention.	**Strategies**: ❑ increase awareness of the need for further skill development and pressure to learn ❑ address barriers and improve their ability to act ❑ increase the expected gains and decrease expected costs

FARMERS

Strategy	Implementation	Possible activities
1. Increase awareness of the need for further skills development and increase the pressure around them to take up learning again	State level	❑ develop partnerships with representative groups like the Victorian Farmers' Federation to build awareness about the need for new skills and the range of relevant programs available to farmers, possibly working through existing VFF publications and meetings ❑ review options for partnerships with commercial farm supplies organisations and State OHS agency to promote accredited training for use of new machinery or equipment ❑ create links to partner websites ❑ recruit opinion leaders with whom farmers can identify, who are respected and in similar circumstances. Use them to: ▪ promote the importance of new skills to survival in the farming business ▪ promote the range of flexible learning opportunities available ▪ report statistics indicating the extent to which others in similar circumstances are participating
	Local level	❑ support State campaign with targeted local publicity activities and joint promotions with farmers' groups ❑ increase incentives in their environment for example recruit friends and family to take up learning too; encourage farmers to attend courses with their sons ❑ develop local networks with local VFF branch and farm supply companies to increase reach to target group ❑ display information and tailored learning products at agricultural shows and field days

2. Remove barriers and improve their ability to act	Local level	❑ provide targeted product information about relevant learning products ❑ adapt existing products to more flexible delivery options ❑ develop short, one-off programs and 'wet weather' options to address the time barrier ❑ develop collaborations with farm goods and equipment suppliers to deliver learning on site ❑ assist farmers to juggle work, family and learning by providing ▪ self paced products ▪ rolling enrolments ▪ take home learning products ▪ learning on line ▪ numerous locations for learning ▪ whole family learning opportunities
3. Increase the expected gains and decrease expected costs	State level	❑ promote case studies of successful farm businesses that have used learning to increase productivity and reduce losses ❑ collaborate with partners to package learning products with other products and services ❑ create short presentations for use at conferences, seminars and local VFF branch meetings
	Local level	❑ Promote low cost options through staggered payment options and information about government assistance ❑ tailor beginner and advanced IT learning products and small business management products to suit farm business ❑ develop practical programs to increase safety and reduce cost of farm accidents

6.2.3 *Almost There* segment, sub group operators of small businesses in growth sectors (eg tourism, horticulture)

Group profile –small businesses in growth sectors	
Segmentation: the 'almost theres' know they are in danger of getting left behind and know they need to get back into learning. In the community, they are the battlers; in small business they are working in competitive new sectors like tourism and horticulture. They know that most small businesses fail and fear failure themselves. They are also likely to have some fear of technology. They know that learning can help them to achieve their goals. There is an over-representation of both sexes in the 25-44 age bracket.	**Learning experiences:** they like learning and the sense of achievement it brings. They also know it is a way to succeed in small business. Some of their previous formal learning experiences may not have been great and like most small business operators, they like to do things their own way. They learn a lot on the job and most of them have turned their existing skills into their business. Long term learning may be difficult to maintain.
Motivation: their fears both deter them and motivate them to learn. They don't want to fail and they want help to get the skills they need but they need encouragement to achieve what they want. They will engage in learning to keep the business viable, especially if it involves a qualification that will secure their place in a supply chain or lead to new business opportunities. They are also likely to need support and understanding from their family.	**Competition:** there is a lot of competition to get over. Time is the major barrier – they don't have much to spare and what they do have is early in the morning, late at night or at week-ends. They are juggling the demands of the business and the family and may feel guilty about taking further time away from family. They are sceptical about small business 'courses', most of which aren't tailored to their needs and want practical helpful teachers who have business experience. And they have twenty ways to spend every spare dollar – cost is an issue.
Key features: small business operators want practical, tailored programs that minimise time away from work. Products delivered in short segments, after hours and at week-ends are attractive. They may like working in small groups or with the family (if it's a family business). They want products that demystify technology, especially computers, and that provide practical solutions to business problems and improve business performance.	Strategies – ❑ overcome barriers to action ❑ make complex procedures simple and convenient ❑ minimise time inconvenience ❑ make the benefits of skills development tangible ❑ increase the urgency to engage in skills acquisition and learning

SMALL BUSINESSES IN GROWTH SECTORS

Strategy	Implementation	Possible activities
1. Overcome barriers to action	State level	❑ develop partnerships with industry sector bodies to develop relevant products for delivery through self paced learning at work ❑ develop partnerships with major industry organisations to encourage small businesses to recognise the value of gaining qualifications to secure their place in a relevant supply chain ❑ develop alternative learning methods which don't rely on use of IT ❑ identify opportunities to assess existing skills and recognise prior learning to shorten time requirements for achieving formal qualifications and boost confidence
	Local level	❑ recruit former business owners and operators as teachers and mentors for small business ❑ develop 'take-home' and 'at-work' products ❑ break up products into smaller, less demanding modules ❑ integrate introductory IT components into other learning activities to increase familiarity and reduce fear ❑ minimise financial costs by offering staggered payment options and promoting information about subsidies or other forms of assistance ❑ support State partnerships with local activity, linking learning products to supply chain requirements (eg for horticulture businesses to supply to supermarket or food chains)
2. Make complex procedures simple & convenient	Local level	❑ provide clear simple information about learning products available ❑ work with local branches of industry bodies to promote course information and organise program delivery in association with other activities
3. Minimise time inconvenience	Local level	❑ design products to fit around time demands of business and family ❑ maximise flexibility in location – deliver products at business locations or local community facilities (eg pubs and clubs) ❑ develop family learning options for family run businesses ❑ develop small group learning opportunities for related small businesses to work together (eg non competing tourism operators)

4. Make the benefits of skills development tangible	State level	❑ promote the recognition and value of VET qualifications across growth industries ❑ engage support of industry sector bodies to promote key skills
	Local level	❑ tailor products to reflect specific business or industry sector skill requirements ❑ demonstrate benefits of IT for productivity and efficiency gains
5. Increase the urgency to engage in learning	State level	❑ make learning a priority using messages in the media which create a sense of urgency and build on motivation to learn by focussing on skills that: ▪ help businesses to make the most of new technologies and the capitalise on opportunities in the rapidly growing information economy ▪ contribute to productivity, profits and business efficiency ▪ make sure your business doesn't get left behind ▪ help business to improve returns on investment in plant and equipment ▪ save time
	Local level	❑ local publicity about small business success stories and causes of small business failure ❑ partnerships with local business networks to promote the importance of new skills for small business survival and the impact of industry developments ❑ local publicity about developments in growth industries and links to skills

6.2.4 Employees of *Here and Now* segments, sub group employers

Group profile – Here & Now employers	
Segmentation: – 'Here & Now' employers are investing in training but it is limited to on the job training for skills that are directly productive. They are interested in maximising the short term returns on their investment in training, not generally in developing their 'human capital'. Most training is on site and on the job. Few are using ACE as a workplace training provider.	Learning experiences: these employers understanding training as a cost, not as an investment. They have not been convinced by previous experiences that investment in people is the key to performance and profitability. They are negative about the cost of training to meet government requirements and training that they perceived to be too holistic.
Motivation: these employers are not yet convinced that if they take a broader perspective on training investment, it will return both direct and indirect economic benefits to the enterprise. They are motivated by the success of their business peers and by training that will increase productivity, efficiency and competitiveness.	Competition: employers in this segment cite time, and to a lesser extent cost constraints as a significant barrier to training. Facing multiple challenges such as increased competition, reduced profitability, high staff turnover and new technologies, training initiatives take a back seat. They prefer to buy in people with the required skills rather than train up existing staff.
Key features: training must be practical and directly linked to improvements in workplace performance - for example improved safety, reduced turnover, improved communications. These employers do not want to bear the opportunity cost of off site training so programs need to be delivered in the workplace around working hours.	Strategies: ❑ implement targeted communications campaign to promote the broader value of training and the specific advantages of training through ACE providers ❑ demonstrate the impact of training on efficiency and productivity in the workplace ❑ build networks with organisations that have significant influence in 'Here & Now' businesses

HERE AND NOW EMPLOYERS

Strategy	Implementation	Possible activities
1. Targeted communications	Local level	❑ target local employers with clear information about the impact of training on workplace productivity and efficiency ❑ identify flexibility features of ACE programs to adapt to specific workplace requirements ❑ recruit local business leaders to promote training through business networks and organisations and through publicity activity with local media ❑ recruit local government leaders to support investment in 'people development'
2. Case studies	State level and Local level	❑ demonstrate how ACE fee for service products can improve workplace safety/ worker morale / improved productivity for example through improved English language, numeracy and literacy skills. ❑ develop detailed case studies of workplaces where ACE (or other training provider) has contributed to improved performance through training
2. Networks	State level	❑ build partnerships and networks to promote the value of investment in training wwith: ▪ professional training and human resource management associations ▪ industry associations including ITABs ▪ State based industry representative and peak bodies ▪ editors in business and trade media
	Local level	❑ build networks at a local level with relevant community, government and private organisations

MARKETING ACE IN VICTORIA

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